



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
RICHMOND

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September 19, 2003

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CHAIRMAN)  
TRANSPORTATION  
APPROPRIATIONS

The Honorable George C. Newstrom  
Secretary of Technology  
P. O. Box 1475  
Richmond, VA 23212



Dear Secretary Newstrom:

As Chairmen of Senate General Laws and House Science and Technology Committees, we have followed the creation of the Virginia Information and Technology Agency (VITA) with considerable interest since we first participated in the crafting of the legislative language in January 2003. We believe that the success of VITA is of paramount importance to the citizens of the Commonwealth both from monetary and quality of service standpoints. Based on personal observations and a formal Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) review, we have concluded that while implementation of VITA is well underway, certain key implementation issues require nearly immediate attention to help ensure that legislative intent and operational success are achieved. These critical items are:

Transfer of IT Investment Board (ITIB) Authority to CIO

The VITA legislation, as enacted, includes a strong oversight function for the ITIB. While it may be within the strict legal authority of the Board to transfer its responsibilities, the legislative intent clearly was to give the ITIB oversight of major agency activities. This is evidenced by the decision to make the ITIB not an advisory board (like the Virginia Geographic Information Network Advisory Board), nor a policy board (like the Commonwealth Transportation Board), but a supervisory board like the Virginia Retirement System Board. As the legislators responsible for the crafting of the language regarding the ITIB, we strongly recommend that the oversight responsibility be returned to the ITIB before major policy, planning and funding actions are taken.

Further, to ensure that the legislative intent behind the allocation of responsibilities is clearly understood by the ITIB members, we suggest that the newly appointed members receive training regarding the nature and extent of their duties. Three legislators who participated in the drafting of the legislation are available to assist in a formal training session for the new members. Considering that the Board members were chosen on the basis of IT experience and independent thinking, we believe that both the Board and VITA will benefit from such training and subsequent participation.

Project Management

Project management personnel, along with adequate training for them, is a critical need if Virginia is to address the multiple project failures which have been estimated to have cost the Commonwealth more than \$150 MM over the last several years. This loss is in addition to many quality of service issues.

It is our strong recommendation that you focus substantial effort – in addition to that expended to obtain a CIO –to address the project management issue as promptly as possible.

Funding for VITA Implementation

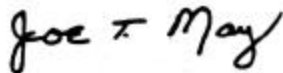
It also has become apparent that the original plan for funding VITA has not proven to be entirely workable. Accordingly, development of an alternative detailed funding plan by the interim CIO and VITA staff is a very high priority item.

We understand that the difficulties faced in implementing effective project management in light of funding constraints may be driving some of the actions of the agency to date, and understand the pressures under which you are operating. However, we also continue to be concerned about the institutional integrity of the line agencies and hope that efforts to move forward with the transformation as quickly as possible does not run counter to legislative intent by stripping agencies of the institutional knowledge they need to implement systems as they go forward.

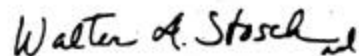
We recognize VITA as a very important part of the Commonwealth's efforts to create and maintain a cost effective and high quality IT environment and we are willing to assist you and your office in creating it. If we can help, please let us know.

We await your response and will continue to closely monitor the situation as we prepare for the upcoming Session.

Very truly yours,



Delegate Joe T. May, Chairman  
House Science and Technology Committee



Senator Walter A. Stosch, Chairman  
Senate General Laws Committee

cc: The Honorable Samuel Nixon